

# THE LEISURE HOUR.

BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,  
AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND.—*Courier.*



A NIGHT ALARM.

"WAIT A YEAR."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AS Warren returned to the hotel—or rather primitive inn, for though large enough to accommodate several travellers, it had little pretension about it—he felt the air particularly hot and close. It was past midnight; no lights were visible in the windows except one twinkling close to a small side entrance, where some one was watching for the night diligence

to Basle in order to deliver up the letters. The large door was closed. In front of the hotel, but at some distance from it, ran the high road, from which a private one diverged to the building, forming a semicircle, the intervening space consisting of a piece of grassy ground, divided in two by a broad gravel walk, planted on each side with poplars. The spot itself was nothing extraordinary, but the scenery around and near was interesting. It was, however, cool and pleasant, well wooded, fragrant with pine

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PRICE ONE PENNY.

and other forest trees, and watered by the silvery Birs.

Whilst Mr. Sinclair was saying a few words to the sleepy watchman, the lumbering of the diligence was heard, and, as if by some stroke of magic, men and horses, issuing from some unperceived cover, were suddenly upon the scene. The wheels stopped, voices were heard, and lanterns flashed; then followed a jingling and scuffling, a few shoutings, and the wheels were again in motion. Next came the measured tread of the tired horses going to their stables, and soon all was again still.

After seeing the man fasten the door, Mr. Sinclair went in the direction of the principal passage, asking for a light. "This is the shortest way, sir, and as good as the other in the end," remarked the man, pointing to a small staircase facing the side door. "Permit me to show you the way." Suited to the action to the word, he preceded him up a flight of narrow, steep steps to the first floor, issuing on a part of the corridor which was strange to Mr. Sinclair. Being a new-comer, he was unacquainted with the windings of the passages, but happily remembered his number. His room was soon found by the rough attendant, who lighted his candle and left him. Notwithstanding his journey, he did not feel tired, and had no inclination to sleep, walking so long in the night air having refreshed him. Besides that, his thoughts were troublesome, and had to be reduced to subjection. His window looking upon the back, upon outhouses and untidy kitchen-gardens, offered nothing to please the eye, yet he kept it open on account of the heat. Aware, at length, that it was time to go to bed if he meant to rest at all, he went to shut it, and started with a sudden and frightful apprehension.

What was it? What did it mean? A red glow proceeding from one of the rooms below immediately darted into flames. As the fearful sight met his eye, the terrible cry, "Fire! fire!" (*au secours! au secours!*), always alarming, but a thousandfold more so in the dead of night, when help seems so far off, if not impossible, was raised. Doors opened and shut, screams echoed and re-echoed above, below, out-of-doors.

Where was Mrs. Fraser? Where was Mona? Warren did not know their rooms, only that they must be on the floor above, as he had gone up two pair of stairs on his arrival. No time was to be lost; the building being of wood would burn rapidly; volumes of smoke from below were already rolling up the staircase as he set his foot upon it. On reaching the top the first person he distinguished was Mona, in a dressing-gown, her hair about her shoulders, and pale as a spectre, hurrying along the passage with a light in her hand. She, too, had been sitting up, reflecting over the events of the day, and, her room looking on the back premises, she had become aware of the fire about the same time as Warren.

"This way—this way, down the staircase, and out of doors at once," said Mr. Sinclair, seizing her hand and trying to drag her towards the stairs he had just ascended.

"Mrs. Fraser and Fanny! save them, save them!" she answered, resisting with all her force, and impelling him along the corridor with her. Winged as she appeared in her rapid movements, and though it took but a couple of seconds to reach Mrs. Fraser's door, a general stampede had taken place before she

gained it. From the upper storey many were hurrying down, adding to the confusion by cries and screams, and dense columns of smoke were rising all round.

At the first knock Mrs. Fraser made her appearance, partially dressed, asking what was the matter. Realising the truth in an instant, she precipitated herself back into the room, frantically calling upon Fanny to get up and run.

"There is yet time to dress her quickly, and to save some of your valuables. The fire is at present at the back; only make haste, and escape is easy," said Mr. Sinclair, who remembered the small staircase with which he had unexpectedly become acquainted, which now appeared untouched, all the smoke and turmoil being at the other end.

"There, Mona," he added, again seizing her hand, "round the corner and down the little staircase. Go out at the door at the bottom of it, I will follow directly with my sister and Fanny. You must, you shall obey me!" he said, imperatively, endeavouring to force her away.

But Mona shook him off, and was inside Mrs. Fraser's room at her pupil's side in a moment. Mrs. Fraser having snatched the candle from her, began securing one valuable after another, and tumbling them together into a shawl, at the same time calling upon her daughter to make haste, Mr. Sinclair and a maid, who had come upon the scene, lending all the assistance in their power.

"Come now, at once," said her brother, in a clear, firm voice, after a few minutes; "there is no time to lose," and Mrs. Fraser obeyed. Taking his arm with her disengaged hand, she told Mona to lay hold of Fanny and keep close to them. Pressed together, they walked towards the narrow staircase, down which others were also hurrying, with boxes and bundles, hastily packed, the general alarm venting itself by cries and lamentations, which greatly served to increase it.

At the top of the staircase Mr. Sinclair stopped, saying, "Mona Moreton, give me your hand, and take Fanny firmly by the other, or if you cannot do that from the narrowness of the way, take hold of my coat. We must not run the risk of being separated." He spoke so imperatively that Mona did as she was bid, except that she reversed the position, giving her pupil's hand to Mr. Sinclair, and following herself.

In that way they safely descended the first flight, but before they reached the second their advance was impeded. Some who had remained behind, endeavouring to save their possessions either on their persons or by throwing them out of the window, frightened by the rapidly-spreading flames or half stifled with the smoke, came rushing upon them with such headlong speed just at the top of the stairs, that Mona found she must either relinquish her grasp of Fanny, or pull her back. Without hesitation she let her go, hoping to be able to follow, but was immediately swept aside, and was unable for a few seconds to regain the staircase. When she did so the bannisters were broken.

In front of the hotel the grass plats were covered with persons of all ages and degree, men, women, and children, asking or offering assistance; strewn besides with boxes, bags, and broken furniture, all that could be cast down in the hurry. The fire raged principally on the opposite side, where the greatest confusion prevailed; the lurid flames continued to

leap into the air, making a canopy of light above, and suddenly bursting out afresh in some unexpected spot.

A fire-engine was soon at work, men of all degrees contributed their aid by forming the usual chain or line, extending from the building to the river or nearest fountain, passing the bucket from one to another, and generally losing half its contents before reaching the last hand.

Another engine was rattling along the road when Mr. Sinclair halted his party out of danger, as he hoped, from the falling timber or fire-brands. All at once Fanny set up a cry, "Where is Miss Moreton?"

"With you," thundered her uncle, in a voice of alarm. No, Fanny had let go of her at the top of the staircase when they were pushed asunder, and thought she was following.

"Mona, Mona, Mona Moreton," shouted Mr. Sinclair, rushing among the heterogeneous crowd, looking hard into every face, and especially at every crouching figure that seemed to be suffering or frightened, and even among the promiscuous heap of things thrown upon the grass.

There was no answer to his cry; no one heeded him. Each one for himself was the common feeling. Desperate with apprehension of the worst kind, he ran to the door by which they had issued. Apparently the flames had not reached that part, but it was shut up and guarded by a sentinel, there being some hope of saving that end, and no one was allowed to go in or out.

"Let me pass, let me pass!" gasped Mr. Sinclair, almost breathless, as he reached the door.

In answer the man on guard placed his gun across it, phlegmatically replying, "On ne passe pas."

"Let me pass, I say," repeated Mr. Sinclair. "There's yet one more to be saved."

"There is no one," returned the soldier in the same impassive manner.

"There is some one missing, a young girl who was with us on the stairs. Open, open; I will give all my fortune to save her."

The English accent of the stranger was not to be mistaken; perhaps the word *donner* on his lips conveyed some solid meaning to the stolid guard, or he thought that under circumstances so peculiar he might disobey orders. He turned the key, opened the door, and snatching a lantern from some one near, held it above his head, as Mr. Sinclair, uttering the same cry, "Mona, Mona, Mona Moreton," but more wildly and despairingly, hurried up the broken staircase.

When less than half-way his foot encountered something soft. He stooped down to ascertain what it was—dead or alive it was a human body—a woman by the texture of her clothes. "Mona, Mona, is it you?" he exclaimed; but there was no response. Half stifled by the smoke, and unable to see before him, he yet managed to get his arms round the senseless figure huddled up as it was, and, with a strength furnished by the occasion, descended the steps and tottered into the open air with his burden in an agony of fear lest he had come to the rescue too late. A breeze just risen, to the dismay of those working against the flames, revived the inanimate form he held. A convulsive shudder passed through her frame sending a thrill of joy to his heart. She moved, she lived, and he had saved her!

"Mona, Mona!" he said, in accents of irrepressible

tenderness, rejoiced to have been the means of saving her from so terrible a death, though their lives must henceforth be parted, and he was answered,

"Ah! Mon Dieu, où suis-je?" The national expression so repulsive to English ears in its application to every trifling incident, was to him as a pistol-shot. His grasp relaxed, his arms fell apart, and he sank senseless to the ground beside the stranger he had rescued.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHEN Warren Sinclair came to himself, so as to be fully conscious of passing events, he was lying on a bed in a strange room, large, and almost meagrely furnished. It contained only the barest necessities. Where was he? How long had he been there? The western sun was shining in at the curtainless window. Certainly it was afternoon. Putting his hand up to his head, in an attempt to collect his thoughts, he found it swathed in linen—another puzzle for his bewildered brain to solve. He remembered having seen a black figure moving about him, and to have heard strange voices, and also a feeling of great pain followed by sudden ease. He had been asleep, perhaps for a long time, but he was now awake, and wondered where he was.

By degrees his recollections became clearer. He remembered that there had been a fire, and that they had been trying to escape, and—he knew it all now. Back upon his memory flashed a deep, poignant regret. Mona had perished, while he had saved another in her stead. The first consciousness of his misfortune had sunk him to the ground, where his head must have come in contact with a sharp stone, hence the bandages and the aching. Anyway his head was sore to the touch, and he had better remain quiet. Some compassionate soul was caring for him, and some kind hand had bound up his wounds. For some time he lay still, trying to realise how it had all happened, and shortly his thoughts grew more and more distinct, and then over Warren Sinclair swept such a wave of hopeless grief that he could not restrain his tears, and they were very bitter ones.

Mona Moreton could never have been more to him than a sweet memory—a centre round which tender thoughts might cling, as to something noble and good, raising human nature in his estimation; but she would always have been that; and now the remembrance that she, whose life he would have purchased with his own, had perished so miserably!—that he had saved another and left her to die—would ever be to him a real affliction, the sternest trial he could be called upon to bear. Growing calmer after a while, partly from the strength of character inherent in him, partly from a spirit of resignation sedulously cultivated, he waited patiently, thinking that as so much attention had already been paid to him, some one would soon be coming to see after him, of whom he could make inquiries where he was, and why he was in bed. But time passed and no one came.

Tired at last of playing the invalid, he tried to get up, and, to his surprise, found himself able to do so without difficulty. Having resumed his coat, which had been taken off, he opened the door and looked out into a narrow passage with two other doors opening into it. Of the first he turned the handle and examined the room. It was small—about one-third the size of that he had left—with a poor little iron bedstead on one side, and on it lay a figure in what



appeared a dressing-gown, Part of the hair, which had been carelessly gathered up, had escaped, and was streaming loose about the pillow. The dark eyes wide open were fixed on vacancy, no ray of intelligence was there to light them up; but alive or dead, sane or insane, the face was Mona's.

Oblivious of the sorry figure he cut with his bandaged head, he threw himself down beside the little couch in irrepressible grief. Suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a voice not quite unfamiliar addressed him in broken English.

"Come back to your room, you. What brings you here? You ugly man. The lady would have one great fright if she saw you with your head tied up like that. You, like the dog of Madame Hubbard, that English sing about. I go for the doctor and I find you well. This way, *mon ami*, I am your good nurse, and will take care of you, though you did throw me away like a bit of *chiffon*. But I am grateful; you saved my life, and I have done you a good thing. Do you know where you are? No! I will say you where. In my uncle's house, and well for you he is a friend of the doctor, or you would have been forgotten. I bring you here all bleeding with your head, and he make the doctor come."

"Who are you?" said Warren, yielding to her wishes and retreating under her direction, as he remembered how much his appearance was calculated to alarm, if indeed it were true that Mona was not dead.

"Who I am? The lady you threw away. I not forget it," she answered, laughing.

"Does she live?" asked Warren, too absorbed by his own apprehensions to heed what was said on any other subject.

"Yes, she is in a kind of stupor from smoke and fright and pain."

"But she must not stay here, she must change rooms with me; mine is larger, better, more airy," repeated Warren, quickly.

Looking first at him, then at the recumbent figure, the Frenchwoman nodded her head, saying shortly, "Can you carry her?" Warren did not hesitate. In the strength of a great joy he forgot his own pain, and taking Mona in his arms, bore her safely into the next room, knowing by the warmth and flexibility of her body that she was not dead.

"That is well; you did not mean to save me, but this one, and you were very sorry. Oh! but you threw me away, as if I were no more than a little dog. And this is your *petite*, your friend. I thought so when I heard she was found. But I am grateful; without you I should have died. I was too late, I went back to fetch my money. Take courage, I will nurse her for you. You are right, she will be better here and you there. Chut, chut, here comes the doctor; he will be so glad to have done with you. Go, go; if the lady comes to her mind she will be frightened to see you."

Thus bound to good behaviour, Warren returned to the little room from whence he had taken Mona, but waited in the doorway to hear the medical report.

The village doctor was a fussy little man at all times, and rendered doubly so by the different cases now thrown upon his skill, two of which were really difficult. Mr. Sinclair's was speedily dismissed, it turned out too simple to be very interesting. Mona's was more serious, but he did not despair even of that, and only wished he had nothing worse upon his

hands. After giving directions to the French lady, with whom he seemed on intimate terms, and telling Warren that he would soon be well, he went away.

Before long Mr. Sinclair obtained from his self-constituted nurse a circumstantial account of what happened after he lost consciousness. He discovered that the lady he had rescued was the niece of the French abbé of the village, who, as soon as her wits were restored, called out for her uncle. Through her means Mr. Sinclair, senseless and bleeding, was conveyed to the abbé's residence, and the doctor sent for, some charitable hand meanwhile staunching and binding up the wound.

When the doctor, after some delay, arrived, he was accompanied by two men carrying some one on a shutter, who had been found by the soldier on guard on the flagstones, close to the staircase where the bannisters had given way. It was Mona, who, having been pushed aside by some impatient hand, had fallen to the ground, too stunned perhaps to rise again, and afterwards kept insensible by the smoke.

In raising his lantern high above his head to light Mr. Sinclair, the soldier had seen something on the ground, and advanced to take a nearer view as Warren issued from the doorway with his burden. Help was immediately procured, and the lifeless body carried out just as the dense smoke burst into flames, and all hope of saving that part of the hotel was lost.

Very soon the whole of it was on fire, and before morning was almost entirely gutted. But among the unhappy fugitives some order prevailed at last. While the men and villagers worked on, trying to reduce the fire, the women and children were housed in different places, the greater part being received into the other hotel, and stowed away upon mattresses in every available space, or upon the floors.

Mrs. Fraser, only partially clad, after being assured that Mr. Sinclair and Mona should have every attention, was induced to go away with her daughter, and naturally repaired to Helen's apartment, already overcrowded. Property, of course, was lost or destroyed to some considerable extent, in spite of a local police engaged to protect it. But the greatest disaster was the loss of a life. One man, in leaping from a window, fell, and was killed. Amid these scenes of alarm, confusion, and suffering, the Abbé Auger was everywhere encouraging, assisting, and directing, putting himself, his servant, and his house at the service of as many as needed them.

By the time Warren Sinclair recovered sufficiently to act for himself the little community had fallen back into a state of resigned quietude, except those engaged in watching the furniture, restoring the property thrown from the windows, or providing for the exigencies of the coming night. When next Mrs. Fraser visited her brother she found him walking about, making light of his own accident, but in great anxiety respecting Miss Moreton.

Helen Lestocq did not accompany her. Garbled accounts of what had taken place kept her in retirement; she heard people talk about the Englishman's despair on discovering that the lady was missing, and of his disappointment at having saved the wrong person, and knew that they were speaking of Warren Sinclair. Only too naturally her former jealousy returned. Even Mrs. Fraser could find nothing satisfactory to say, and wisely remained silent, leaving Helen's affairs to adjust themselves.

As day after day passed, she had greater matter

for surprise. Passing from a state of insensibility into fever, Mona became delirious, and was continually calling for Captain Orde, urging him to come quickly before it was too late, and to speak out at any cost. But that was not all. After a vehement address to him, frequently repeated, she would turn to any one in attendance and say, gently, "You know he is his brother's heir."

Once, when Helen Lestocq, more from curiosity than kindness, came to visit her, Mona raised her head from the pillow, and, after looking at her for an instant, pointed to the door, and imperatively told her to go away, adding, in an explanatory tone to Mrs. Fraser, who was present, "She knows he is his brother's heir."

Dismayed as much as astonished, Helen needed no second bidding, but quickly disappeared, telling Warren, whom she met on the way, that Miss Moreton's mind was completely deranged. Those about her shared the same opinion in a measure, yet Mona had her lucid intervals, when she was as quiet and tractable as a child. If she were mad, there was some method in her madness, as her manner to each one about her was uniform. To Mrs. Fraser she was calm and rational, except that, constantly harping upon the same string, she was always asking her to send for Captain Orde, and when Warren Sinclair was present she was fidgety and uneasy.

The little Frenchwoman appeared to please her, nor did she tire of her volubility. True to her promise to Mr. Sinclair, Madame Sicard nursed Mona with great devotion.

"Monsieur saved my life, and I will take care of his *petite*, although he threw me away as soon as he knew who it was," she repeated to every one who would listen to her story. "I am grateful, but he think me worth nothing at all," and the little woman laughed all the more merrily when she found her narrative unpalatable to the hero.

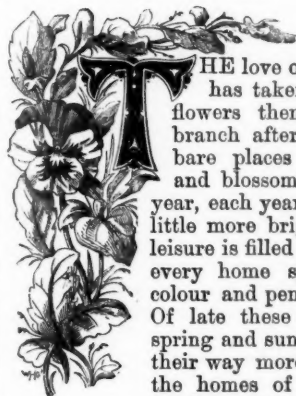
There was much in it distressing to Miss Lestocq, and something perplexing to Mrs. Fraser. Having vainly tried to prevent Madame Sicard from designating Miss Moreton as Mr. Sinclair's *petite*, she was wise enough to enter into her joke of having been thrown away as a *chiffon*, nevertheless she was greatly puzzled by the new aspect of things, and could not cease to wonder over Mona's fixed idea, repeated with vehement energy, that Captain Orde should be summoned immediately. He had at length been heard of, having written to his banker for money, to be forwarded to Copenhagen, where he purposed going when he left Norway. His letters would naturally be sent there to await his arrival, but no one could calculate upon his movements.

Meanwhile most of the visitors to Tavannes had left; only a few, and those chiefly detained by the indisposition of one or more of the family, remained. The accident of the fire seemed to have the illogical effect of postponing all the arrangements connected with the marriage. No allusion was made to it. Warren Sinclair spent his time chiefly in wandering about the country all day, returning late, tired and exhausted, and even Mrs. Fraser's ardour was quenched for a time.

Under these circumstances Helen began to think that it might be better for her to go to Thornmeade. Her present surroundings were uncomfortable; her position was daily becoming more and more false. It had been Mr. Sinclair's particular wish that she should stay with her mother's family; it was not too

late to comply with it, and could she not yield in such a manner as to make it appear a graceful concession on her part? She did not hide from herself that she had need to conciliate him, and yet was ever haunted by the fear that if once she made Thornmeade her home, she might be neglected, if not forgotten, excluded from every other kind of life. Such was the state of things when, about ten days after the fire, Cecil Orde walked into his sister's primitive little sitting-room.

## LEAVES AND BLOSSOMS.



THE love of flowers, when once it has taken root, grows like the flowers themselves, putting forth branch after branch to cover the bare places of life, and budding and blossoming afresh year after year, each year a little more freely, a little more brightly, till every bit of leisure is filled with interest and hope, every home space lighted up with colour and penetrated with fragrance. Of late these blessed messengers of spring and summer have been finding their way more and more widely into the homes of the poorest and the abodes of sickness and misery, bearing a message of the mercy which endureth for ever to many a heart which words would fail to reach, rousing no spirit of contradiction in the bitterest, and never wearying the most heart-sick or feeble sufferer. We can never be thankful enough for flowers. It is well worth our while to study how to make the most of them. And this I think we do not always succeed in doing with our gathered flowers, just for want of keeping in mind a few very simple principles of arrangement.

In the first place, we often mar all their beauty by wrong choice of receptacles for them. And it is the greater pity to do this, because the best are nearly always the simplest. The humblest flower that grows has colours far more beautiful than most glass or china; and be the vessel ever so beautiful in itself, it seldom adds much by its colour to the beauty of the flowers; seldom even entirely harmonises with them; unless, indeed, it is of one uniform and rather neutral tint. For every nosegay, even every single spray of flowers, is already a combination of colours, if only of simple white and green; and generally a perfect combination. And it is seldom, indeed, that a combination already beautiful can be bettered by adding to it another combination of colours, made without special reference to it. As a rule, the fewer colours—we might even say the less colour—a flower vase has, the better it answers its purpose. Nothing is more beautiful for this purpose than clear transparent glass, of some simple form, without any sort of pattern or decoration whatever. Common drinking tumblers, especially if rather deep, answer admirably for most flowers, and are always at hand. One of the loveliest arrangements I ever saw, the recollection of which has haunted me ever since, was a simple bowl of clear glass, standing upon a round piece of

*looking-glass*, and filled with pure white azaleas with abundance of their own deep-green leaves. The great white blossoms seemed to be suspended in a kind of mysterious atmosphere of their own, all sparkling and radiant, and separating them from everything else in the room while harmonising with all. The use of looking-glass in this way is very important, and not so frequently practised as it might be. Wherever flowers are it is a gain to be able to multiply them, and present different views of them, showing the underside of the leaves, and the profiles of the lovely stems and blossoms; and besides this, the light reflected by them plays among the petals and sets them off in unexpected ways. I would advise every lover of flowers to have a few pieces of looking-glass, of different sizes, and with either glass or the most invisible of metal rims for frames, upon which to place their glasses of cut flowers. They not only multiply beauty, but preserve our tables without the abomination of fluffy mats.

A very simple arrangement, which gave me continual pleasure for many weeks, made itself for me quite unexpectedly by the accidental breaking of a common bedroom water-bottle, leaving a ball of glass like the so-called little "fish-bowls," which have been so much used of late for single flowers on dinner-tables. And, by-the-by, real fish-bowls of various sizes, intended to hold gold fishes, can be bought at Covent Garden and elsewhere very cheaply (from about sixpence to two or three shillings apiece), which would make beautiful glasses for large nosegays, only the opening is so large as to require an abundant supply of flowers to fill it. My broken bottle has an opening of not more than an inch in diameter, so that it grasped firmly about half a dozen long-stalked daffodils, which stood up proudly among their own leaves, with the air of growing out of their glass bulb. Round the opening I stuck in a few ivy-leaves, originally, I confess, with the view of hiding the rough broken edges of glass, but the broad dark leaves made an admirable foundation for the pale grey-green leaves and stems of the daffodils, and set off the brightness of their golden heads.

The size and shape of the lip of flower vases is a very important point. Perhaps no general rule can be given about it, but a little practice in arranging flowers soon gives one a kind of instinct about the forms which will give sufficient support to the stems without cramping them, and which will contain a sufficient allowance of water. Even if the water is changed every day (and few people can be troubled to do this) the flowers will not last so long if they have not abundant *space* of water. Different flowers require such different kinds of support that every one should keep a supply of shallow and deep, spreading and grasping glasses, and remember the fable of the fox and the stork. Soup-plates and pudding-basins are among the most useful vessels for flowers. I can remember delightful days long ago in the country, when our poor cook's patience used to be sorely tried by the rapid disappearance in spring and summer of all her best-loved dishes. They fitted so irresistibly into certain favourite baskets, which asked open-mouthed to be filled with roses—and with roses looking in at the windows and crowding upon the hedges, how could one refuse to satisfy them?

Baskets are among the most charming flower-holders, especially for wild flowers. Not elaborate painted things in white and gold, or fine bleached

construction, like lace-work, but real serviceable wicker baskets. Many of the very prettiest come from the greengrocer's, or may be picked up in out-of-the-way villages for a few pence. I make it a point of conscience never to pass by a really pretty basket without buying it, if it is cheap, as almost all the really pretty, because simple, ones are. That is, unless I have enough already of the same pattern, and even then it sometimes costs me a pang to pass it by. It is so pleasant to fancy one will want a few more baskets for one's flowers.

When we are supplied with all we want in the way of baskets, bowls, vases, glasses, etc., comes the question of how to fill them. If possible, let us gather our own flowers, bearing in mind the particular vessel destined to receive them. The perfection of pleasure in arranging is to be able to step out through the open window to gather just such another spray as we want for this tall glass; such a fern to droop over the edge of that basket; such a crimson bud as will give a point of colour to the bowl we have in hand, as an artist would lay on a dash of chrome or carmine to bring out the warm tints of his picture. But we cannot all have beds of growing flowers under our hands, as the artist has his colour-box; and happily, unlike him, we can hardly go wrong if only we love and admire our colours enough. For the picture is almost made for us, everything is prepared without our labour, and we have only to taste the joy of completion. We are not called upon to make, only to see that we do not mar, what is put into our hands.

In gathering flowers only two mistakes can well be made, but they are disastrous. One is not cutting the stems long enough; the other is not gathering leaves enough. To please the lover of flowers you must be prepared to brave the gardeners; and, indeed, it is better to be content with the commoner flowers, of which you can gather enough to do justice to their manner of growth, than to snip off the choicest rose or lily that ever was grown, just at the base of the flower-stalk, without a bud or a leaf to complete it. Of course we are thankful enough for such "specimen" flowers when we cannot have more, and they may be craftily put in among somebody else's leaves, like cuckoos; but they will never have half their natural grace without their own perfectly adapted leaves and stems, and a sister bud more than doubles the beauty of a fully open blossom. A single blossom cut off by itself is like a portrait of a beautiful woman's head without the figure; we lose half the character, as well as the beauty, of the original, if we miss the pose of the head on the shoulders, the turn of the figure, the finish of the hands and feet. So I would rather have a perfect spray of the common china-rose, with its thorns and its little crimson buds and its delicate dark leaves branching out from it with such individual grace, than the most exquisite golden hothouse rose with two inches of stem, not to mention the possible horror of a wire through its tender petals.

And not only let us have each spray as perfect as possible, flower and bud and leaf forming a natural and unapproachable harmony of growth, but let us have abundance of each flower's own leaves to accompany it in its new sphere. What a cruel mockery it seems to lovers of flowers, living in London, when they go into any of the happily numerous and increasing flower-shops to see bundles of lovely blossoms—cheap and plentiful enough—without a single



leaf of their own! I am in the habit of dealing at three of four of these flower-shops—and glad enough to have them within reach—but no money would buy there the branches and sprays of greenery that the humblest garden supplies in abundance, and upon which half the charm of the flowers depends. What Londoner does not know the bunches of really beautiful geraniums and roses and larkspurs and lilies and escholtzias and nasturtiums and sweet-peas, and all sorts of perfectly hardy and common flowers, tied up without a scrap of green; and the shilling or half-crown's worth of flowers which the shops send one, in a sheet of white paper, each single spray often as lovely and fresh as heart can wish, and plenty for the money, only with not a leaf to bless themselves with except the everlasting layer at the back of fern-leaves—male fern, hard fern, and broad buckler fern—laid quite flat, and used like so much wrapping-paper; sometimes a few sweet-scented geranium-leaves, or as many penny-worths as one likes of maidenhair fronds, which, though so beautiful, are the least serviceable of all possible foliage! Why does not some enterprising florist make a *specialité* of foliage? Think of the abundance of long sprays of ivy, the shining berberis-leaves, the branches of guelder rose, and ilex and copper beech, the acanthus and mouse-ear, and myrtle sprays, which in every country garden one may gather to make a green bed on which to lay one's bright blossoms. Or if we go into the kitchen-garden for the same purpose, what an exquisite background can be made of strawberry or vine or fig-leaves, or even the feathery tops of asparagus and many-coloured carrots, noble artichoke-leaves, and others too many to name! Certainly any shop in which liberally-gathered leaves of these and other kinds were to be had would be worth going far to visit.

But I was speaking of the flowers' own leaves, from which they are so cruelly separated. I constantly see great white arums sold in London shops without one of their leaves, which must be at least as plentiful as the flowers, and which make half their beauty. And eucharis lilies are scarcely ever accompanied by so much as one of their broad green shafts of foliage when they leave their native green-houses. No doubt gardeners have their reasons for grudging us the leaves of some flowers, but it seems nothing short of heartlessness to separate, for instance, Christmas roses from their noble, dark, branching leaves, or larkspurs from the delicately-cut blue-green leaves, which so wonderfully harmonise with the ultramarine of the blossoms, or roses and geraniums from theirs, with all the delicate adaptation of more or less red tint in the foliage to the varying hues of the flowers. The way in which the various greens are adapted to the infinite variety of rich or delicately-tinted flowers is in itself a lesson in colouring; and when you can gather your own flowers you ought to feel a scruple of conscience about putting asunder blossom and leaf which have been so wonderfully joined together.

They are sure to supply a perfect harmony, so that if you are at all doubtful of your own powers of arrangement you have but to fill each glass with one kind of flower, among plenty of its own leaves, and your nosegay *must* be beautiful. One more caution, however, may be needed even in doing this. Do not crowd your flowers; most people put three times too many flowers into one vase. If you really love to

see each one in its perfection you should carefully avoid this, not putting in one more than will allow the *growth* of each to be clearly visible. The way their lovely heads are poised upon the stems is sure to be full of grace and character, and this is lost by crowding.

If you can trust yourself to venture upon combinations, begin with the simplest, of only two kinds of flowers; more may be added if you see they really improve your arrangement, but cautiously. Self-restraint is needed as much in arranging flowers as in other works of art, and a certain severity belongs to the most cultivated taste.

I will conclude by describing a few particular flower-harmonies, which have been a joy to me not only for the short day of their actual life, but as a memory for years afterwards, and which any one may use as a hint for fresh experiments.

One of these was contained in a wicker basket of yellowish tint and good shape, with a twisted handle and an invisible pie-dish within; this was filled with dark shining leaves of the Portugal laurel, and from among the intense shadows of these leaves flamed out the most brilliant orange and gold of nasturtiums, melting into the darker fire of crimson-purple petunias. Set in a window where the light shone *through* the thin petals, these flowers were literally like flames, one changing splendour of glowing fire-tints.

I must be candid now, and confess that in this particular case their own leaves would have spoilt all. It was an artificial "*effect*," as the painters say—an exception which proves the rule. I remember the same basket filled entirely with common blue periwinkles *in their own leaves*, with some of the long sprays wreathed round the handle, being an object of wondering delight and admiration to some friends, who could not have imagined that so lovely an effect could be produced by such simple means. It took a long time to fill, for the periwinkles were small, and each one had to be carefully placed, so as to leave green enough, and not too much, as a background.

Another lovely sight rewarded my almost despairing search for flowers in a much neglected, overgrown garden, where the chickens were accustomed to have things all their own way. Two rather large and deep vases of milky-white glass were filled with long pendulous branches of half-wild guelder rose, the great white balls drooping over the sides of the vases in the most graceful, languid way, and here and there in the middle rising up like a fountain. With these were mixed in some long straggling branches of the palest pink monthly roses, growing in clusters of four or five together, with a wild grace peculiar to such shady wildernesses as had been their birthplace. These pale loose bunches had an inexpressible charm of drooping form and subdued and delicate tints, with a certain wild luxuriance of growth which one rarely sees in properly cultivated garden flowers.

Another combination of white and pink, which I shall not soon forget, was a shallow bowl, or plate, filled with Christmas roses, resting on their own most characteristic and beautiful leaves, intermingled with sprays of coral-coloured begonia. A bowl filled with large moon-daisies and dark ivy-leaves, the ivy-leaves chiefly filling up the centre, and the daisies wreathing the edge, lightened by feathery sprays of quaking couch-grass, was a very lasting and harmonious arrangement. Another of most delicate

grace was a tall, exquisitely-shaped vase of Venetian opal glass, holding a few blossoms of white spirea, with two or three sprays of an exotic whose name I do not know; but it had very dark green narrow-pointed leaves, and tiny spikes of flowers, of a brilliant orange, verging towards scarlet.

But time and space would fail to enumerate half the lovely combinations which crowd upon one's memory and fancy as one recalls the flowers of the past. Visions rise before me as I look back of baskets full of nothing but autumn leaves and red or black berries; of bowls of heather, lasting almost as long as on its native moors, with a mixture of green or yellowing bracken; of beds of moss sprinkled over with primroses or wind-flowers; of simple bunches of fern fronds, or wallflowers, or blue irises, and I gratefully think how beautiful they have made our homes, with scarcely a moment's thought or labour.

And, after all, some of the nosegays we have most enjoyed have been indescribable rainbows of nameless colours—great bowls and baskets and pots full of gleaming tints jumbled together, as in an old-fashioned garden border, and diffusing a general sense of summer fragrance, made up of all sorts of indistinguishable scents. But one great advantage of the simpler combinations is that they do fix themselves so distinctly in the memory and recall the days of long ago, whose flowers never fade, though they may die every day. The flowers of the field, which are a type of all that is perishable, are also surely a fitting type of what is most unchangeable. They have been with us all the days of our life, they are bound up with our earliest and our tenderest memories of father's love and mother's sympathy, and still they are new every morning. C. E. S.

## HANSTEEN'S TRAVELS IN SIBERIA.

### VII.—VOYAGE DOWN THE JENISEI AND RETURN TO JENISEISK.

IN the vast solitudes of Northern Siberia nomad tribes are to be seen who subsist entirely on what the chase affords. The west portion, between the Oural Mountains and the River Jenisei, is inhabited by Ostiaks; the central portion (within the government of Jeniseisk) by Tungusians and Samoyedes; and the immense tract to the east by Jakutes. These countries possess neither paths nor high roads; therefore, a journey across Northern Siberia is only practicable by means of the five great rivers—Obi, Jenisei, Lena, Indighirka, and Kolyma. Dr. Erman (who formed one of our party) followed the course of the Obi from Tobolsk as far as the small town Beresov, situated about lat. 64°. Lieutenant Due, who had left Irkutsk, went down the Lena as far as Vilnisk, which is placed in the midst of a desert in about the same latitude, and I descended the Jenisei from the town of Jeniseisk to Turuchansk, situated about lat. 66°. These settlements, exposed to the rigorous climate of the extreme north, serve as places of banishment to political exiles; and every three months each of us, on our different routes, beheld some of the unfortunate victims of the insurrection of which I have already spoken. The more compromised, the farther towards the east were the conspirators exiled; but at these three stations they are

permitted a certain degree of liberty. The most culpable were employed in the mines of Nertschinsk, near the Chinese frontier, where they worked in chains. Nothing very remarkable can be related of such desert zones! However, these countries, rarely visited by strangers, are little known to Europeans, so that I venture to put down some simple jottings of my excursion, in case any *savant* would like to follow my route, to serve as a guide, and to furnish him with useful information.



TUNGUSIAN SCHAMAN, OR, SORCERER.

The River Jenisei, flowing from the town of Jeniseisk, directs its course towards the north, and ultimately falls into the Arctic Ocean. All along the river side, as well as on the shores of all the rivers flowing to the north, Russian peasants have constructed wooden huts and have made settlements. Between Jeniseisk and Turuchansk, over an extent of 921½ versts, are five villages with churches, ten villages without churches, and twenty-nine groups of winter habitations. These last consist of about five wooden buildings each. Perhaps they were originally constructed for travellers when overtaken by storms; perhaps as dwelling-places for the peasants, who at this season are engaged in fishing. At the time of my visit (July) they were all occupied. Here, as in all parts of the Russian empire, at the entrance of every village one sees large posts, on which is inscribed the number of dwellings and of their occupants—so many souls. The men only are counted, women not being included in the number of souls. Although no post-horses are found in this territory, arrangements can be made with the peasants for conveyance in



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sledges during the winter from Jeniseisk to Seló-Dubtscheskoie. From this last place to Turuchansk, a distance of 582 versts, no horses are to be had for sledge-travelling on the river, so that during summer the traveller hires a boat, called a lodka. Going northward, with a southerly wind, sails are used, and sometimes oars, or when the air is calm one is borne along by the current. For the return voyage, made against the current, sails cannot be set unless a strong north wind should prevail. If there be no wind, the lodka must be drawn on either by men, by horses, or by dogs. In this case, a long slight rope (called "*betscheva*") is made secure to the top of the mast, at the end of which four or six cords of different lengths are fastened, and the extremity of each of these cords is bound round the body of the man or the animal. Generally five horses are used, three abreast, and two others harnessed in front. When men are harnessed, each man wears a band of birch-bark, several folds thick, round his body, a little below the shoulders. The cord is fastened to the back of the waistband, and if there be six men, they trot on, one after the other, rapidly enough, stooping forwards to help themselves on.

Dogs are harnessed in the same manner by small belts round their bodies. As there are no paths by

fasten them to the *betscheva* cord. When the peasants go down to the boat, one sees these dogs gaily gambolling before them, jumping into the boat, as though it were really a party of pleasure for the



A TUNGUSIAN.



A YAKUT WOMAN.

poor animals. The saying of the Kalmuk is true indeed, "The dog is the friend of man."

Our boat was borne by the current slowly towards the north; but to sleep at night was impossible, on account of the musquitos, while during the day the heat was stifling. Upon arriving in the evening at Jartschevskoie-Seló, we met a troop of Ostiaks, men, women, and children, coming from Jeniseisk, where they had just paid their annual impost, consisting of skins of sable, squirrels, blue foxes, and other animals. Each of their light boats, bordered with skins and birch-tree bark, was drawn by three dogs. During the hours of their meals, the dogs were fastened to stakes by the river side, the women and children remaining with them. The women had lively black eyes, and the faces of some were quite black. Their figures were small and slender. One, distinguished by a crimson "caftan," or chemise, was the wife of an Ostiak prince, whose husband had just paid his tribute, and he was now accompanying the district inspector on his tour of inspection, perhaps in the quality of interpreter. The other women wore blue caftans. Their language resembled the Mongolian. It is rare amongst the Ostiaks to find any one understanding Russian. The men were armed with bows and arrows, and on their shoulders they bore a well-filled quiver. Their dexterity as

the river side, all merchandise and effects are transported by water. When the peasants wish to visit each other, it is always by water that they do so. Each peasant possesses at least one pair of dogs; and that they may not have the labour of rowing, they

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archers is most remarkable; they have a correct eye, and their arrows invariably hit the mark. Even children of nine or ten years old are extremely expert.

To prevent all chance of escape of the unhappy exiles, the government has given the Ostiaks the right of shooting all unknown persons, not of their own race, whom they may meet on their territory. In the part of Siberia inhabited by Russians, every one unprovided with a passport is arrested as a vagabond ("bradiaga"), and sent to prison. If he be taken up in European Russia, he is transported to Siberia. It is, therefore, impossible for an exile to escape on that side. Some have endeavoured to do so by following the shores of the Arctic Ocean towards the west, with the hope of arriving at Archangel; but they have either perished with the intense cold, or have been devoured by wild beasts, or become victims to Ostiak arrows. One individual only, it is said, arrived alive at Archangel, having taken twelve months to perform his journey! He had undergone such privations, that upon the completion of his hazardous enterprise, and on the recital of his sufferings at St. Petersburg, he obtained his pardon.

For a time we advanced towards the north without any remarkable event. The left bank of the river was quite flat, covered with heaps of sand forced up by the river. On the right bank appeared a chain of low-wooded hills, stretching far away in the distance. On the 6th July we reached the convent of Troitzkoi, a large white edifice with a fine tower, situated on the high banks of Nischni Tunguska, which, flowing from the eastern Tungusian territory, falls into the Jenisei a little to the south of Turuchansk. On the 7th, Schadrin, our captain, announced my arrival at Turuchansk by firing off his guns three times, and I discerned with horror a procession of the town functionaries coming to pay me their respects, for I had resolved to employ the first days of my arrival in taking observations, the opportunity being very favourable, and had decided not to make nor to receive any visits until I should accomplish my scientific labours.

During the hot season at Turuchansk it is the custom to take a siesta during the day, and to begin active life only at midnight. My host was a trader, engaged in commerce, and so the house began to be alive and animated in the middle of the night. The town derives its name from the little river Turuchan, which flows from the west into the Jenisei. It is built on an acclivity, with a marsh lying beneath, and in the principal streets you have to walk on half-rotten planks. If you make a false step you get plunged up to the knees in mire. Even in summer the surface of the soil is covered with stagnant water, above which a greenish slime appears, partly concealed by rubbish and all kinds of refuse thrown down from the windows of the houses. Of course pestilential vapours are exhaled in profusion. The fact is, that the soil is never completely unfrozen to a lower depth than about twenty-five inches, even in the height of summer. The roots of trees, instead of penetrating downwards, extend laterally, therefore, through the earth. When the winter snow melts, for it cannot escape by infiltration, it is arrested by the underlying ice, and forms a liquid mire mixed up with the first layer of earth. The unhealthy exhalations rising from it produce many maladies, especially scurvy and dropsy. Nevertheless one sees

little children playing about the streets, laughing and enjoying themselves, just as they do in other countries.

When we started on the return journey my captain fired three salvos as a parting salute to the town, and on Gustav bringing me my coffee the next morning he informed me that we were now proceeding with six dogs. I ran to see the new team, but could not at first distinguish the animals to which we were so much indebted, for the boat was being forced on against wind and tide, as though by magic. At length he called my attention to an undulating line caused by the dogs' tails, and I soon discerned this line in the midst of the reeds by the river side. They were laboriously performing their work, intelligently pulling all together. We were certainly proceeding more rapidly than if we had been directed by men, who are sometimes obliged to go out of their way to avoid marshy banks, whilst the light-footed dogs manage to secure their hold on the bank, and sometimes even descend into the water.

After dinner we passed an Ostiak encampment on the left bank, and saw two "yourtes" (or huts), constructed with the bark of birch-trees; also five of their small boats heavily laden. Some of these wanderers paid us a visit, but we could not very well understand one another, as they did not speak Russian. The river here appeared like a large lake, being about six geographical miles long to one and three-quarters broad, with steep rocks on each side, which force the river towards the east, then abruptly to the north-west, and at last to the south-east, forming a wide bend towards the north and north-east. In this irregular course, restrained by independent rocks, large and small rapids occur, which much accelerate the downward voyage, although they render one's return difficult. To overcome these impediments on our route we engaged eight men to draw the boat, in addition to our crew. Two ropes were made fast to the top of our mast, each man was attached to the boat by his rope, and all had to surmount rocks which were almost perpendicular, and indeed scarcely accessible. The boat advanced but slowly, and sometimes we came to a dead halt. Soon a projecting point of rock rendered it necessary to send a portion of our men to the other side of the river (which just there was very narrow), in order to conquer the difficulty. The extremely rapid current caused our rope to break, which rendered our position critical, and we had to remain several hours without moving. In the morning some horses awaited us at Derevna-Solika. They trotted along, but with a contrary wind it was difficult to advance against the current. At night a northerly wind enabled us to set the sail, and we arrived at Serebrimkova. We soon after reached one of the large villages, Selo-Nazimovoskoie, consisting of thirty-two houses, and a population of sixty-six souls; and in the afternoon reached Jeniseisk, reiterated firing of cannon announced our approach to the wife of our captain. The whole voyage, comprising more than 2,000 versts (the five days' rest at Turuchansk included), had occupied only twenty-six and a half days, notwithstanding the frequent halts necessitated by observations and other causes.

During my stay at Jeniseisk the heat became intense. I find in my notes that the thermometer in the shade, at noon, marked 24° (Reaumur), and at four p.m. 33° exposed to the sun. In the evening,

after having taken leave of the mayor and others, I quitted Jeniseisk to find Lieutenant Due at Krasnoïarsk, whence we had agreed to continue our route by Tomsk, Barnaul, Semipalatinsk, and along the Kirghis line as far as Orenburg and Astrakan.

VIII.—TO ORENBURG, AND DEPARTURE FOR THE KIRGHIS COUNTRY.

AFTER having rejoined my companion Due at Krasnoïarsk, we commenced travelling towards the south. The country which we were about to traverse was studded with small forts, with redoubts and advanced posts, about twelve and thirty versts apart from each other. These fortifications, defended by Cossacks, are constructed to protect the Russians domiciled along this line of country against the savage hordes of Kirghises (a Tartar race, whose blood is perhaps mingled with that of the Kalmuks), who lead a nomadic life on the great steppe. The Kirghises sometimes make incursions on the neighbouring territory, seize on the Russians whom they find, and sell them as slaves at Khiva and Bokhara, where they are treated in the most barbarous manner.\* Their last attack had taken place about ten years before our arrival, but it was energetically repulsed, and 2,000 assailants paid for their temerity with their lives. Since that period they have shown a more pacific tendency, and now one may pass without incurring much risk. These fortifications serve also as stations. We declined the two armed Cossacks whom they offered us as an escort, deeming this addition to our party useless.

The Kirghises, who are exceedingly poor, take service as artisans or labourers with the Russians domiciled on the line; some even speak Russian as well as the Cossacks do. They live all the year round, even in winter, under tents made of felt ("kibitkes"), which they contrive to keep warm by fires made of reeds. Their little children go quite naked, and at night they are thrust up to their throats in the warm cinders. We beheld, once only, a Kirghis woman of high rank. She was on horseback, and it was a curious sight. Her velvet habit was really magnificent. She was of slender figure, sat astride her horse like a man, and wore boots with great green heels. From the top of her pointed turban a long white veil floated. Her black hair was plaited with strings of coral and pearls descending to her shoulders. We wished to have had a closer view of her, but when we tried to make her understand, and approached nearer, she was frightened, and galloped off, making use of her whip and of her heels to accelerate the pace of her horse.

From the town of Semipalatinsk (the most southern point that we visited on the "Line of the Irtysh") an important trade has of late years been established with the population, extending from Tashkend to Thibet. We were free to go to Thibet, and even to the East Indies, they assured us, only it would be necessary that we should shave our heads and adopt the Kirghis costume. That is what the Russian merchants do, who repair thither every year, and gain five per cent. on their capital. Thus Russia, with a portion of territory only half-civilised, succeeds gradually in civilising her wild undisciplined neighbours, like the tame elephant which attacks the wild one. Commerce and reciprocal interests bring

them together; and here, as elsewhere, Providence causes the wants of men and their desire of gain to subserve His supreme designs.

Arriving the 1st November at the citadel of Troisk, the commandant informed us that merchants of Bokhara had brought the cholera to Orenburg, and that the city was surrounded by a military cordon; he thought it would not be without difficulty that we should be allowed to enter the town, and that we should have to undergo a long quarantine if we wished only to make a short stay there. The line of Orenburg was the most dangerous of all the lines, six or eight Russians having lately been captured by the Kirghises, and sold as slaves at Khiva. It was necessary, therefore, to be escorted on all that line by twelve Cossacks. To avoid these perils, he advised us to make a *détour* towards the north-west, across various slopes of the Oural Mountains, which would give us the opportunity of seeing the great iron foundry and the manufacture of arms at Slatoust, which furnishes arms to almost the entire Russian army; that then we could proceed to the town of Ufa, and there await news from Orenburg. To this arrangement we were obliged to submit.

The town of Slatoust is situated on the Oural Mountains, a mile to the west of the highest summit which belongs to Europe. The director and the workmen at the foundry are nearly all Germans, and all kinds of arms are manufactured here. For the commonest manual labour Russians are employed. The Russian peasant, living on bread, onions, and water, with, at rare intervals, a little brandy, receives a few kopecks only per day. We remained many days in this town, having the rushing sound of conduits of water, and the click-clack hammering of the iron forges constantly in our ears. Presently we were informed that the cholera had disappeared from Orenburg, owing to the cold weather. This good news being confirmed, we pushed on resolutely southwards. The tract lying between Orenburg and Ufa is inhabited partly by Tschermishes, by Tschuvasses, by Baschkirs, and by poor Tartars. We had much to suffer during this journey. Our last resting-place at night was a Baschkin station; and, with the cold at 20° degrees, we had to sleep on the bare boards in our overcoats, two broken panes in the window allowing the keen air to penetrate. We set off in the morning to Orenburg quite frozen. Arrived there about midday, and found it surrounded by a military cordon. Immense bonfires had been lit at certain distances to purify the air, and near each fire a large cross, painted black, had been erected. Processions of monks in black mantles, bearing crucifixes and images of saints, made the circuit of the city, singing hymns and praying. All had felt consternation whilst the exterminating angel had swept over the city. After a delay of two long hours we were informed that we could enter the town only on condition of going at once into quarantine in one of the suburbs; that we must abstain from all communication with the inhabitants, and give our parole that we would remain at least one month at Orenburg, until it should be certain that the town was free from infection.

Orenburg, a fortress and arsenal of the first rank, was built in 1754, near the River Oural, to overawe the Kirghises who dwelt near. The city is spacious and populous, has large and regular streets, with more stone edifices and buildings than one generally finds in these countries. It contains nine churches

\* The recent annexations of the Russians in Asia have pretty well put an end to these proceedings, and have been partly brought about by them. Interesting information on the Kirghis will be found in Vambery's "Travels in Central Asia," and Atkinson's "Travels in Siberia."—Ed



and two bazaars. The "Menovi Dvor," or exchange (called also the Asiatic Corn Exchange), is about three versts from the farther side of the river. A large fair is yearly held there. It is a large square, surrounded by four rows of small houses, intended for the occupation of the Russian and foreign merchants who congregate at the market. Towards the month of July one sees the Kirghises arrive, the Bokharians, the Khivans, the Taschkentes, and even traders from India. Not to expose themselves unnecessarily to danger in the steppes, they travel in caravans, each composed of fifty merchants, and fifty to a hundred camels loaded, and asses, which carry men and provisions, so that one may reckon every year more than 2,000 camels arrive. The Bokharians bring raw and spun cotton, cotton stuffs with silken stripes, thick warm dresses, and lamb-skins. The Kirghises bring annually 15,000 lambs, sheep, and lamb-skins; some thousands of ox-hides, fox, wolf, and other sorts of skins, and coarse felt carpets. The Tartar and Russian merchants barter the produce of their own and foreign countries, the Russians taking the Kirghis merchandise in exchange for the commonest articles of their national industry, especially those made of iron or other metal. It is estimated that Russia yearly gains two millions of roubles by transactions on this market-place. The Kirghises, with whom they like to keep up friendly intercourse, are infinitely more favoured than the Bokharians and the Khivans. By order of the Emperor Alexander, a Russian church was erected here, as well as a mosque for the use of strangers, who are almost all Mohammedans.

We have made the acquaintance of a young man, Gregorii Karelin, who had received an excellent education. Formerly a lieutenant, he was now secretary to the chief of the Kirghis horde, established on the steppe between the Oural and the Volga. His wife, brought up at St. Petersburg, and gifted with excellent talents, had profited by her good education. Karelin offered us a room in his house, where we found the repose necessary for our labours, and enjoyed the advantage of daily intercourse with this interesting family. In his house we made the acquaintance of all those best worth knowing at Orenburg. Karelin said he would accompany us part of the way, and offered to repair to the khan to announce our arrival, to suggest to him that he should invite us to rest a few days in his palace. He added that he would propose to the prince to send us camels with kibitkes, which we could set up on the steppe, on whatever spot we wished to pass the night. This furnished us the opportunity of studying this nomad people, so interesting in many respects, and making the acquaintance of their sovereign, who was esteemed a wise and well-informed prince. But the governor of the district would not hear of this project, under the plea that he was responsible for our lives. Owing to this opposition, and as the governor obstinately maintained the sanitary cordon and the quarantine, our stay at Orenburg was prolonged until the beginning of January. The general had never visited the steppe, whilst Karelin had crossed it several times, and the latter knew by experience that we should not meet with any difficulty.

All the country to the south of Orenburg, between the Rivers Volga and Oural, as far as the Caspian Sea, is a flat and arid steppe, of which the soil is

salt, as though the sea had once covered it. On the 6th January we made an excursion about seven Norwegian miles to the south-west of Orenburg. In removing the surface soil one finds a vast layer of transparent mineral salt. This salt is shaped by means of hatchets and wedges into blocks ten feet long, one foot broad, and one foot thick. These blocks are again subdivided into smaller portions. They are stacked up like wood, and then sent to the Volga on sledges. The depth of this deposit has not yet been ascertained; it extends several versts on each side, but it is not known where it ends. It has been calculated that the space now being worked would suffice to provide the empire with salt for many generations to come. The labourers make pretty articles for presents of this clear transparent salt, such as crosses, goblets, saltcellars. When polished, it has the transparency of glass; reduced to powder, it is as white as snow, and its taste is agreeable. At length, on the 14th January, we quitted Orenburg to descend towards the Kirghis steppe. Our visit to the khan seems to offer sufficient interest to claim a special chapter.

## OVERLAND TO BLACKWALL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JACK AFLOAT AND ASHORE."

A BOAT that will call at Brunswick Pier has just started from the up-and-downing "dummy" on the west side of London Bridge; but well worth seeing, over and over again, as are the riverscape and shorescape which her passengers will behold, they are too familiar for fresh description. Let us, then, descend the orange-peel-littered steps that lead down into ditchlike Thames Street, and set out for Blackwall by a land route that shall follow the windings of the river. If St. Magnus the Martyr was a Christian who thought cleanliness next to godliness, he must suffer a second martyrdom when he looks down upon the mire about the handsome church which Sir Christopher Wren built for him, with the three apertures in the base of its steeple, provided for by the architect, as if in anticipation of the time when houseladen London Bridge would have become a memory merely, and passengers would come down Fish Street Hill—where City men's mansions, as well as the King's Weigh House, whilom stood—to take steamboat for Gravesend, Margate, or Boulogne. But the mud at which St. Magnus's dial glances askance is the true gold with which London streets are paved, the dirt engendered by incessant traffic. Lower Thames Street contains Billingsgate, the Custom House, the Coal Exchange—the last fast losing its inappropriate whiteness, and looking very much like a grimy schoolboy's tear-slobbered face. We are in a region of wharfingers and warehousekeepers, of wool quays, packet wharfs, warehouses, shipping agents, lightermen, carmen, ship-brokers, Custom House agents, Custom House solicitors, gaugers, merchants of many orders, fish factors, fish salesmen, and fishmongers.

The roadway is blocked with vans and carts and costermongers' barrows, some of the first piled high with "empties." The foot-pavements are thronged with a queer miscellany of people, male and female, almost all moist and muddy, and many slimy or spangled like harlequins. Fruit porters in knee-

breeches and dirty white stockings trot along in file with bulging boxes on their shoulders, or dive back, still in file, to the riverside, their knots looking almost as natural a part of them as the hump of the camel. Smaller fruit boxes slide down boards from the first floors of warehouses into waggons like schoolboys keeping the "pot a-boiling." At the bottom of other waggons pink Dutch cheeses roll about like giants' "blood alleys." Crane chains dangle overhead with unoccupied ball and hook, or creak as the winch winds up dropsical-looking bales and straw-packed crates. Some of the early coffee-stalls still keep their stands, and collect little throngs of customers. Here a man is selling blue guernseys and bright-coloured underclothing. There a man stands with a tray of streaky yellow "rock," and other highly-spiced and more highly-coloured confectionery. The fruit shops glow with oranges and lemons, and gleam with chestnuts nestling in sacks or receptacles like workmen's tool-baskets. Great cocoa-nuts, trimmed, frizzled, carved, and painted into the likeness of the heads of ferocious Indian chiefs, hang from the lintels. That little cask with the head off looks at first like a keg of oatmeal, but is really filled with the green grapes of Almeria packed in sawdust. In the window there are sloping trays of pomegranates, baskets of tomatoes that seem rather to have been modelled out of red wax than ripened by the sun; cricket-ball-like Brazil nutshells, with a bit sawn off to show the nuts snug-gling within like field-mice in a nest; bunches of yellow and black bananas from the Madeiras or Azores like bundles of soiled white kid gloves; and, also from the Azores, plump pineapples set up in wooden frames, which give them the look of hour-glasses.

Now and again one gets a refreshing whiff of fruity perfume in Lower Thames Street; but its dominant odour is fishy—even when fresh, not appetising. Billingsgate, whether or not it got its title from the King Belin, who is said to have built it B.C. 400, and to have had the ashes of his burnt corpse placed in a brass vessel on a high stone pinnacle of his portal, is an ancient name in English history; but Billingsgate Market is not so old as a fish market as is generally supposed. In Richard the Second's reign, fish taken east of London Bridge was sold in Cornhill, fish taken west in Cheapside. In Queen Elizabeth's time fish shared the market with corn, salt, stores, victuals, and fruit, "grocery ware excepted." In 1699 it was made a free market for all kinds of fish on every day except Sunday, when mackerel only might be sold before and after the hours of divine service. The growth of London has so swollen the market's trade, that there is now a New Billingsgate, whose still freshly-white brick contrasts strangely with the slush upon its floors.

There are curious contrasts of colour, too, in the wares displayed in box, barrel, tub, sack, basket, hamper, or piled like heaps of road-metal or old clothes; silvery salmon and salmon trout, gleaming in the midst of great knobs of glittering ice, and sprats as silvery; white-undersided flat-fish, making moonlight in shady places; coral boiled lobsters and crayfish; unboiled, muddy-blue, mottled lobsters, with claws tied up with twine; unboiled crabs making spiteful pinches at vacancy; live cod, barrelled cod, salt cod; fresh haddocks, smoked haddocks, looking, as they hang in row, very much like miniature yellow oil-skins; brown shrimps, pink spreads of

Yarmouth prawns, like rose beds; Yarmouth bloaters, fresh herrings, red herrings, kippered herrings, brassy Digby chicks; dried sprats in bundles like firewood; writhing eels; sand-coloured cockles and whelks; dull purple periwinkles and mussels, with seaweed still sticking to them; clumsy dried shad; graceful, fresh mackerel, still gay in mottled golden-green and silver; mullet, gurnet, and John Dorys; and oysters, ranging from slim, thoroughbred Whitstable natives, down to "commons," that look like lumps of mortary old building material. The varnished Dutch eel boats, not unlike Dutch vrows, of plump person and soap-polished apple-cheeks, which lie off the market, manned by stolid mariners in Dirk Hatteraick costume, are in themselves a picture. In addition to the open-air vendors of savoury edibles and hot bibbles, there is plentiful provision for refectation in Lower Thames Street, and the names of the taverns have a pleasantly old-fashioned smack. The Vintners' trade, so far as years go, is venerable here. In Henry VI's reign, we read, the Searchers of Wines made presentment of one pipe of unsound red wine "at the corner of St. Magnus, at Le Coroun." The names of the affluents of the street are also quaint: Darkhouse Lane, Beer Lane, Water Lane, Harp Lane, St. Dunstan's Hill (named from the church around which pigeons circle with clapping wings, and then fly off to settle, strut, and peck on the Custom House Quay), St. Mary-at-Hill, Salutation Court, Love Lane, Botolph Lane, and Pudding Lane, in which stands the rectory of Allhallows, Lombard Street.

A file of its bearskinned Grenadier garrison march out of the Tower's Lion Gate and tramp up Tower Hill, rifle on shoulder. In the Tower Ditch a couple of drummerboys are practising round-arm bowling at a stick.

It is hard to believe that this muddy spot, on which those commonplace modern warehouses look down, and two ragged urchins are squabbling for a half-penny fished up out of a puddle, was the site of the scaffold which drank the blood of Fisher, More, Cromwell, Earl of Essex, Lady Shrewsbury, Surrey, Lord High Admiral Seymour, Protector Somerset, Sir Thomas Wyatt, Dudley Earl of Warwick, Guilford Dudley, Strafford, Sir Harry Vane, Stafford, Algernon Sidney, Monmouth, Derwentwater, Kenmuir, Kilmarnock, Balmerino, and Lord Lovat. On Tower Hill Lady Raleigh lodged while her noble husband was caged in the grim fortress yonder; but we shall never get on if we stop to talk about the Tower.

Passing nautical instrument makers, cochineal merchants, the grey Trinity House, looking out on its green-and-black enclosure, gay shipping-boards, leaning back to back, and the dreary-looking Mint, whose drab is relieved only by the red coats of its sentries, we turn down by the lofty dead wall which encloses the docks, to form which St. Katharine's Hospital and a whole parish were swept away, the dug-out earth being carted westwards to form a foundation for Pimlico. Irongate Stairs and Wharf at the bottom still tell of the Tower—how much more easy would escapes from it have been if fast steamers had started from a spot so near to it in olden days. Luggage-laden cabs are rattling up to the adjoining St. Katharine's Wharf with passengers bound for the Continent, while about the entrance hangs a little crowd of amphibious loafers, swollen by strays from the little knot of unemployed labourers

lingering about the dock-gate round the corner, watched silently, and perhaps not superfluously, by two statuesque policemen.

The bridge over the Hermitage entrance to the London Docks is sundered, and on each portion stands a little impatient throng, waiting until a barge shall have made her way out, which she does in the most provokingly leisurely of styles, as if glad of the opportunity of being, for once in her life, an object of interest, although in her case it is only a wish that she would make herself scarce a little more rapidly. On the other hand, just when we think that we are free, she manages to foul some of her rigging with the shore. But at last the severed halves of the bridge swing round, and the imprisoned passengers leap the gap as they come to.

Malcolm tells us that, although Wapping was embanked in 1544, and had dwellings upon it not long afterwards, the low ground behind the river wall, Wapping Marsh, was so little built upon that the London Docks, unlike the St. Katharine, could be constructed without erasing any large number of houses. Wapping High Street and Wapping Wall we have now to wind along. At first there are high buildings on both sides, connected by second and third-floor bridges, spanning the darkened street, but the buildings dwindle as we go on, and here and there, precious though their sites must be, we come upon old mud-splashed, close-shuttered houses that seem to have been locked up for half a century. It is easy to imagine ghostly eyes peering out of the shutter-holes, or to picture to yourself a robber of the water-rat species suddenly opening the door and fiercely demanding why he was disturbed in his lurking place, if you hammered at any of the rusty knockers after nightfall. Execution Dock, where pirates used to be hanged in chains at low-water mark, and left for three tides to cover, still retains its name; and one almost expects to see the "Molly who has never been false, she declares," coming up from "Wapping Old Stairs," when the eye lights on those familiar words upon a wall. The alleys that give access to these and other old stairs, nowadays are curiously slim slits between high walls, sometimes blocked by a muddy boat that looks like a hippopotamus come on shore to have a nap. Lamps glimmer, like miners', in the dark, far-stretching ground floors on both sides. Floury men peer over from the top floors of throbbing steam-mills, as if they meditated suicide. The smartest shops in Wapping are those of the shipping butchers, which Arthur Orton has made notorious. Marine stores shops here are appropriately so named; and in the gloomy pawnbrokers' shops, which seem to be suffering from indigestion owing to the quantity of ill-assorted booty they have gorged, spyglasses and such like articles also tell of the sea. Ship biscuits are baked here, and potatoes preserved. We pass rope and oakum works, chain-cable makers, tobacco warehouses, filtered water works, sailmakers, mast, oar, and blockmakers, shipwrights' and barge-builders' yards, and other works connected with shipping. There is, so to speak, an almost ubiquitous smell of tar. One is scarcely ever out of sight of the red ensign, or the white-fringed mercantile Jack. And the public that fly the flags are congruously named: the Old Dundee, New Gun, Ship and Punch-bowl, Black Boy, White Swan, Golden Anchor, Watermen's Arms, Prospect of Whitby. Wapping is fringed with a bow of wharfs, Sufferance and

otherwise; and Old Gravel Lane, which runs into it, derives its name from the ballast-carts that used to rumble down from the gravel-pits in Sun Tavern Fields, where, in 1615, a cemetery was discovered, from which were dug up coffins of stone and lead, urns, lachrymatories, ivory sceptres, and a cupid.

Side by side, on the river bank stand two buildings which tell of the triumphs of modern engineering—the round staircase which once marked the Wapping shaft of the Thames Tunnel, now converted into the Wapping station of the East London Railway, and the covered approach to the Thames Steam Ferry. Wapping Church is one hundred and twenty-one years old, but, thanks to the smoke-drying it has received, it looks a good deal older. Its predecessor had seats below the level of the graveyard, which was so swampy that graves had to be baled out as soon as dug. In spite of the moist nature of her surroundings, however, a Wapping milkwoman is said to have lived to the age of 101, dying in Well Alley, 1766, and leaving behind her £1,000, which she had made by her business, to be divided among her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

And so on by Shadwell and Ratcliff, from which, in 1553, Sir Hugh Willoughby sailed to discover a north-east passage to China, sweeping in state past Greenwich Palace, in which Edward VI lay a-dying, too sick even to look out on the brave show. It is difficult now to associate grandeur of any kind with Ratcliff. A ship in dock thrusts her bowsprit almost across its Broad Street; the mean buildings look as if they had been washed with a mixture of sepia and soot; and the long-shore men, who loaf about with their hands in the pockets of their threadbare pilot-jackets, seem to be some of the least prosperous members of their tribe. Crossing the bridge which spans the inlet to Limehouse Dock, passing wharfs littered with wood, stone, hay, and straw, we worm our way into Three Colt Street, Limehouse, which, in spite of its narrowness, seems, with its street stalls and knots of loungers, quite a main thoroughfare after the solitude of some of the lanes, all their bustle being upon the riverside, which we have traversed. Some of the loafers, clustered about public-house doors, are plainly of the type in Liverpool called "corner men," and regard with rat-like eyes four tall, broad-shouldered, well-dressed negro sailors who have strayed from the Strangers' Home in West India Dock Road, and are staring about them and expressing their gratification—it would be hard to say at what—with white-balled eyes that look, and white-toothed mouths that jabber, in a very childlike or childish fashion. Brawny though the darkies are, I fear that they will not stand much better chance than their slim Arab fellow-lodgers, shamefully maltreated here a short time ago, if they go on strolling about Limehouse, in that fashion, and refuse, when challenged, to hand over their tobacco and give out money for beer. The stock eulogies on English morality and manliness make me sick when I think of the cowardly roughs who swarm, like vermin, all over London, and the especial ruffians who haunt the riverside.

When Pennant took, before us, his riverside walk, he ended it and stopped to dine "at a small house called the Folly, on the water's edge," in the regal manor of Poplar, so called from its abundance of poplar-trees—where are they now? But we must do more than that—circumambulate the Isle of Dogs.



Notwithstanding renewed depression of trade, it is a very different looking place from what it was during the time of wide-spread distress some years ago. Then once busy works stood silent and solitary, row after row of cottages was shuttered, and depressed men out of employment dawdled about with their hands in their pockets by scores. But now the industries of the island seem to be in pretty fair swing, and varied industries they are. The West India and Millwall Docks bristle with masts; we pass the rattling yards of engineers, iron-workers, shipbuilders, ship-tank manufacturers, iron cable makers. Here lime is burnt, there copper ore is stored, there slate, and farther on stone, brick, and tile. Bolt and nut makers, seed crushers, gas-holder makers, manufacturing chemists, night-light makers, makers of wire rope and telegraphs, firewood dealers, manure merchants, timber dealers, sellers of pitch and tar, rag and canvas merchants, shoulder one another in jumbled proximity. Riggers, sail-makers, and stevedores, barge-builders, ship-chandlers, ship-carpenters, tar-refiners, cement makers, gun-carriage, mast, and flock makers, white-lead manufacturers, patent metallic lava manufacturers, are congregated here. In this dry dock a ship is being prepared to brave the billow and the breeze once more; in that yard a ship is being broken up into a picturesque jumble of worn planks, truncated spars, frayed cordage, and crumpled green copper; and among towering chimney stalks and puffing steam-engines rise dumpy pottery cones.

The dock labourers pour out to dinner, and engineering hands, in black-streaked, greasy duck, which looks as if hardest scouring could never make it white again, hurry home to theirs in neat houses, which seem half ashamed of the begrimed pater-familias who pays the rent. Half-a-dozen bronzed foreign man-of-war-men are strolling to their vessel with their shirt-collars half down their backs; a little fellow, with gilt "foul-anchor" buttons on his brand-new "reefer," comes along with his plump papa, *en route* for his first ship, the merchantman in which he will soon cease to look so smart, proudly striving to imitate the roll of the more experienced mariners ahead; and a negro sailor is amusing the whole youthful population of a miry lane, and their mothers also, assembled grinning on their doorsteps, by the capers he cuts in the middle of the mud.

These muddy lanes running up to the river-wall give one somehow the impression of being in a big shallow saucer, floating on the Thames, which, if the saucer tilt, may come over. Although the isle has been much built upon of late, every here and there it still shows a green, moist patch of the original marsh, and boards announcing land to be let on building lease are islanded in coffee-coloured ponds, which splash refreshingly as mischievous youngsters bombard the boards with stones and clods. To protect their panes from such artillery, all the windows of one far-stretching factory that still stands empty have been closely wired. Free-and-easiness appears to be the most prominent characteristic of the rising generation in the Isle of Dogs. A member of it, who has not risen much above one's knee, punches the same with his podgy little fist as he passes, exclaiming with cheerful familiarity, "Hullo, old fellow!" The literal kids of the Isle of Dogs are also frisky, playing at leapfrog in the streets; but its donkeys are the dreariest of their race. Here is one, with a hide like a worn-out hair-trunk, that stands up to his fetlocks in blacking-

like slush, watching two men who are beating a carpet—thud, thud, thud, thud—on a slightly less soppy bit of ground, with lack-lustre eyes too work-weary even to be able to take spiteful delight in seeing a couple of his oppressors set to it. Railways run into and steamboats touch at the Isle of Dogs, but its moist wildernesses, in which churches and chapels, houses and schools, seem to have sprung up like funguses, and the cries of costermongers make one think of the croaking of frogs, are connected with the drier world by a peculiar line of omnibuses also, the vehicle being two-thirds an ordinary bus, and one-third a grocer's van with the sides knocked out. Altogether, although only a few minutes' railway ride from the City, the unaccustomed wanderer in the Isle of Dogs might fancy himself in some colonial new settlement, especially when he reads announcements on the walls of a forthcoming entertainment by "The Aborigine Minstrels."

Crossing more flanged bridges, passing Lloyd's black proving range, and more drab dock-wall, we find our way into a narrow street, in which blue omnibuses suddenly disappear in a dark yard, like bluebottles dragged to slaughter by some huge unseen spider—a street with low, dark houses, which look old enough for Defoe's Blackwall waterman to have lived in them. From one, tenanted by a ship-carver, there protrudes, as a trade sign, a figure-head, and a little lower down there is an old-fashioned gateway, with still graceful though crumbling carving on its lintel, and a massive carved coat-of-arms above. And thence we penetrate into the muddy road that fringes the eye-wearying dead wall of the East India Docks, white-stencilled, as indeed a good many other dead walls are throughout the dock region, with "Power of Prayer."

Entering by a police-guarded gateway, we pass through the docks, with their four-wheeled waggon dust-bins, their tiny trams for barrows and toy-trucks, their clipper Blackwall, Thames and Mersey, and Aberdeen liners, their fussy little tugs, and huge yet lanky ocean steamers—those that use the Suez Canal painted or being painted white—and come out from the Export Dock on broad, breezy Brunswick Pier, with the bright, bustling river beyond. Except a single Australian liner anchored off the Emigrant Depot, very tiny do the craft look after the leviathans we have seen in the various docks on our way down, but these two mites of tugs, towing trains of coal-barges, are making splash and splutter enough for craft twenty times their size.

A boat for Woolwich has just left the pier, red rings on a black funnel show that a boat from Woolwich is alongside, so we will dive down the pier's hatchway to its landing-stage and embark for Hungerford.

## Varieties.

REVENUE FROM ALCOHOL.—The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his last Budget speech, referred to the consumption of spirits as affecting the national revenue. "I ask, in what circumstances could it be expected that the consumption of spirits in this country would fall off to such an extent as seriously to injure the revenue? It must be from one of two causes—either from some general failure of the consuming power of the people—from some failure in their ability to purchase spirits, the will remaining as it was—or from some great change

in the habits of the people, inducing them to abandon the use of such enormous quantities of ardent spirits. If it were the former, it would tell upon all the sources of revenue, just as well as upon that derived from spirits. But if the reduction of the revenue derived from spirits be due to the other cause, if it should be due to a material and considerable change in the habits of the people, and increasing habits of temperance and abstinence from the use of ardent spirits, I venture to say that the amount of wealth such a change would bring to the nation would utterly throw into the shade the amount of revenue that is now derived from the spirit duty, and we should not only see with satisfaction a diminution of the revenue from such a cause, but we should find in various ways that the Exchequer would not suffer from the losses which it might sustain in that direction."

**MONACO AND MONTE CARLO GAMBLING.**—The stories of ruin to be heard every day, sometimes on good authority, are horrible. Fortunes, trust money, provision for children and widows, the sums acquired by the sale of commissions, sums raised on house and land, have disappeared in a few days or hours. Often it is the extravagance of the companion that drives her victim back and back to the tables, deeper and deeper. But the women themselves are the most reckless gamblers. The common computation is a suicide a month, and there sometimes come three or four together. On the ramparts, or the gardens of Monaco, there are several points from which ruined gamblers have thrown themselves into the sea, 300ft. below. Only the other day, a "lady" threw herself out of her third-floor chamber into the road. There have been suicides in the rooms of the Casino, and one at the table itself. Having staked and lost his last franc, a gentleman stood up and drew a pistol, and discharged it into his mouth. For the reception of such scandals there is provided a room, handy for the railway, which passes almost directly under the Casino. Some inquest there must be, and it is performed by the servants of the establishment. But most of the victims go away and hide themselves, and die, like a sick dog, in some corner, where they hasten death, or let a broken heart take its course. It is impossible even to conjecture the total amount of the annual ruin, nor is that an important matter, for the loss of a few hundreds is as utter ruin to some people as tens of thousands to others. When a man cannot meet his creditors, or even his wife and children, it is all over with him, unless he is devoid of natural feeling and lost to shame. The mere excitement of a day's gambling has been known to kill people constitutionally weak of heart or head, whether they have won or lost. Ecstasy works the effects of despair in such cases. People have been known to go to Monte Carlo after being assured by friends and doctors that it will be their death if they do, return home late, and die in a few hours. The attraction once given way to, becomes irresistible. It is on this fact that the bank chiefly stands. If a visitor loses, he leaves the table and there is an end of him. If he gains, he always returns and plays till he has lost everything. . . . France has a protectorate over Monaco, and it is even said that the people are liable to conscription for the French army. Why, then, it is asked, does the French Government allow here what it does not allow at home? Europe, it is added, is interested, and, indeed, under an obligation to interfere. These are questions which people will answer their own way. The real strength of Monte Carlo consists in the weak points of European morality. The Prince of Monaco has only to point to the Stock Exchange of every European capital, where, every year, there is twenty times as much real gambling, under the name of speculation, as there is at Monte Carlo.—*Times Correspondent.*

**ZULU KRAALS.**—The village usually consists of a circular enclosure, formed by a single or double row of stakes, the only break in which is a narrow door or gateway just wide enough to allow a cow to pass. Inside this is a second, but much smaller, enclosure—the "isi-baya" in which the larger calves are kept. Between the isi-baya and the outer enclosure are the round mole-hill-like huts of the inhabitants of the kraal, the number of which varies from ten to almost any number, though they are usually few rather than many. The huts of the servants and inferior people are placed on either side of the gateway, while that exactly opposite to it is the abode of the great man, should the kraal be a small one. In the latter case, the little hamlet may be the abode of the members of one family; and if large, the neighbouring ones are also tenanted by his relatives, especially if the latter are people of consequence, and have many wives and a corresponding number of huts—each consort requiring one for her own special use.

Ulundi, the Zulu capital, is not an imposing city. The late David Leslie, who knew it well, describes it as lying in the northern end of an amphitheatre about eight miles in diameter. The surrounding hills are very beautiful, partly green and partly covered with mimosa-trees, and broken up here and there into precipices. The White Umvalesi river runs through the centre, and smaller streams intersect the area in all directions. "The consequence is that, from its situation, it is very hot in summer; while, from the plenteousness of water, it is very cold in winter. The kraal itself contains, I should think, about five hundred huts." This was in 1868, but it is not likely that there have been many changes, if any, since then.

**PREJUDICE WANING.**—American papers record that on a day in February last, for the first time in the history of Congress, the Senate of the United States was presided over by a coloured man. The Vice-President having occasion to leave the chair, Senator Bruce, of Louisiana, was called to his place, and presided with great dignity. It is a remarkable coincidence that while he was occupying the chair, the discussion of the claims of another race, the Chinese, to an equality of privilege with white men (or rather privilege to come to this continent) was in progress.

**CANARIES.**—At the last Crystal Palace Bird Show, there were no fewer than 680 canaries. These were divided into 56 classes, a number which could be indefinitely increased, but is in itself sufficiently significant of the effect which artificial selection has had during the comparatively short space of time (only three centuries, it is believed) during which the little finch of the Fortunate Islands has been known to Europe. In 1677 canaries in England were chiefly imported from Germany, and were of a green colour. In a work published in 1709, 23 varieties are mentioned, comprising nearly all those known at the present time. They are now bred in Norwich, Coventry, Derby, Northampton, Nottingham, Glasgow, and the manufacturing towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire. In thousands of garrets, in which a sedentary employment is pursued by the head of a family at home, the clear notes of the canary rise above the click of the shuttle or the whirr of the sewing-machine. Almost invariably the nest-birds are reared by the assiduous care of working men. The pet fancies of the Norwich shoemakers have the place of honour in the Crystal Palace catalogue.

**HAILSTONES.**—A hailstorm of extraordinary severity passed over the Tipperah district in Eastern Bengal on the 13th of March. The magistrate's official report says:—"Some hailstones fell as large as cricket balls. The storm lasted only about fifteen minutes, and its track was apparently not more than 300 yards wide. Large trees were uprooted, bamboo clumps swept down like grass, and houses levelled with the ground. Twenty-nine persons were killed and 114 wounded, mostly by the falling trees and houses. A considerable number of cattle were killed, and among the victims was a tiger."

**HELIOGRAPH SIGNALS.**—On the organisation of the Afghan expedition heliographs were supplied to each division. With General Donald Stewart's column telegraphic communication was maintained by means of the heliograph from the Khojak Pass to Girishk. General Roberts, from Khost, flashed his messages to the fort at Bannu, a distance of sixty miles; while Sir Samuel Browne, from the heights above Ali Musjid, announced the capture of that fort to the expectant garrison of Peshawur by means of the Mance heliograph. While we in India have been utilising the instrument, other nations have not been slow to avail themselves of Mr. Mance's admirable invention. The Spaniards use it largely, and recently a series of experiments was conducted by which Madrid was placed in communication with Ceuta and Algeiras by optical telegraphy. Owing to the difficulty experienced in maintaining electric cables across the Straits of Gibraltar, orders were issued, on the completion of these experiments, for the permanent establishment of heliographic communication between Tangier, Tarifa, Ceuta, and Algeiras, and arrangements are in progress for its employment between different outlying West Indian islands not connected by cable. The United States Government have adopted the heliograph in their army, and it is in use in France and Belgium. For some reason the instrument was unfavourably reported on at Chatham, and consequently its introduction into the home army has been retarded. It is vain to cast idle regrets over the past, but there is no doubt that had visual signalling, either by the heliograph or by flags, been adopted in South Africa between Rorke's Drift, Isandlana, and the advanced camp, the disaster of the 22nd of January would never have occurred.